

member of numerous social service organizations and committees.

The daughter of Swedish immigrants, Liz was born and raised in Monroe, WA, and has lived in Everett for 45 years. Liz and her husband, Don, who is retired from Weyerhaeuser, have two grown sons and two grandchildren. Liz's announcement of retirement was met with expressions of regret and loss from her colleagues and constituents, but they understand that she deserves more private time with her own family and, I am sure, some new challenges.

I believe Liz chose politics as a way to accomplish community good on a larger scale than was possible as a lone caring individual. A strong believer in the two party system, she has long been active in her own Democratic Party, but always respected and was respected by her friends in the Republican Party. She did not lose her civility nor her sensitivity to other points of view. And she never forgot her personal responsibility to her constituents. A fellow councilwoman, Karen Miller, says: "She always looked at how what we did would affect people in their day-to-day living."

Ms. Liz, I salute you. In these days of intense cynicism about politics and politicians, your career stands out as a shining example of what a politician can accomplish and can be. You provide a model, in your motivation and in your performance, for all who seek to be entrusted with the public trust.●

ZEBRA MUSSELS AND SEA LAMPREY

● Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. President, I would like to take this time to express my appreciation to the managers of the Commerce, Justice, State appropriations bill for their support and acceptance of an amendment which would provide funding for research on non-indigenous species in the Great Lakes—zebra mussels and sea lamprey.

While zebra mussels may sound harmless, they have caused health hazards as well as economic and environmental devastation in the Great Lakes region. For example, zebra mussels are largely responsible for increasing the bacteria levels on beaches surrounding Lake St. Clair. Because the zebra mussels consume particles in the lakes, sunlight is able to shine through the clear water. This increased sunlight reaches the aquatic plants on the lake floor causing them to grow more rapidly and prolifically than they would without the aid of zebra mussels. While this may not sound problematic, these plants then trap bacteria which cause health hazards to swimmers. The Lake St. Clair beaches have been forced to close due to the unhealthy levels of e-coli bacteria in the water.

In addition, while each zebra mussel is not much larger than a fingernail, they can cause multimillion-dollar problems to energy systems in the Great Lakes. These tiny animals attach to water intake valves needed to

generate power for our communities. They attach to each other and create a reef-like barrier in these important intake valves. Clearing the zebra mussels out of these valves is a multimillion-dollar task.

I comment the Great Lakes Environmental Research Lab for their work on eradicating the zebra mussel population and again I thank the managers for their support of GLERL's work.

I also appreciate the managers' support for additional funding for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. This commission is the only organization conducting research on reducing the sea lamprey population in the Great Lakes. The commercial fishery in the Great Lakes was all but eliminated in the early 1950's largely due to the impact of the invading sea lamprey. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission's work so far has helped the fishery rebound to a current economic value in excess of \$4 million annually.

Because of the explosion in the sea lamprey population, Canada intends to increase their contribution to the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission. By treaty, however, the United States must provide 69 percent of the funding for the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission. Therefore, we must increase our contribution in order to leverage additional Canadian funding. I am pleased that the Canadians are working with us on this problem and am confident that the funds spent on sea lamprey research will be beneficial on a national as well as an international level.●

WE MUST SAVE MEDICARE—BUT WE MUST DO IT RESPONSIBLY

● Mr. DORGAN, Mr. President, if there is one thing that everyone seems to agree on in the debate over Medicare, it is that the future of the program must be guaranteed. Thanks to Medicare, 99 percent of older Americans now have health care coverage. It would be a tragedy for this program to become insolvent, and I am prepared to vote for the changes necessary to preserve it, just as I have done in the past.

Where I differ with some congressional leaders, however, is over how much projected Medicare spending must be cut in order to save the program. The 7-year budget plan, which passed the Congress in June over my objections, cuts projected Medicare spending by a whopping \$270 billion. This same budget plan also cuts projected Medicaid spending by \$182 billion while providing \$245 billion in new tax breaks.

I believe it is wrong to be making an unprecedented level of cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, and education while granting tax relief largely to taxpayers making over \$100,000 per year and to large corporations that take advantage of tax loopholes.

MEDICARE SOLVENCY

And according to Medicare experts, the amount needed to save the Trust Fund is \$89 billion, not the \$270 billion

the budget would cut. Clearly, the vast majority of the Medicare cuts—\$181 billion—have nothing to do with keeping Medicare solvent. The reason this budget cuts Medicare three times more than is necessary to save the Trust Fund is to pay for the one big cost item in the budget: new tax breaks.

THE PLAN PROPOSED BY SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADERS

Under the plan passed by the Senate Finance Committee, premiums for Medicare part B, which pays for physician services, would double and could exceed \$100 per month in the year 2002. This premium would be deducted monthly from seniors' Social Security checks. On top of that, the part B deductible would also increase from \$100 to \$220.

Beneficiaries would also be given three options for receiving care: First, seniors could choose to remain in the traditional, fee-for-service plan; second, beneficiaries could choose to move into private managed care plans, like health maintenance organizations [HMO's]; or third, seniors could set up medical savings accounts [MSA's] to pay for their health care expenses. I believe Medicare should be expanded to give seniors more choices for coverage, but the same basic level and quality of care now available to beneficiaries must be assured. I would also oppose a proposal that would force seniors into health plans which restrict their choice of doctor.

The wealthiest seniors—individuals with incomes over \$75,000 and couples making more than \$150,000—would be asked to pay more for their Medicare by reducing the part B premium subsidy they receive. I support this proposal as a part of an overall effort to control the rate of growth of Medicare spending.

The Senate proposal would also increase the eligibility age for Medicare from 65 to 67 between the years 2003 and 2027. This would mean that people born since 1938 would have to wait longer for Medicare.

Finally, the majority of savings would come through reducing payments to hospitals, physicians, and other health care professionals who provide Medicare services.

IMPACT ON SENIORS

So what will these cuts mean to Medicare beneficiaries? I think the impact could be quite serious. Medicare premiums and deductibles will increase for North Dakota's 103,000 senior citizens, and quality and availability of care for all North Dakotans will be threatened.

I am concerned that the premium and deductible increases could make Medicare coverage unaffordable for some seniors. Most older Americans have very modest incomes; 75 percent of seniors on Medicare live on less than \$25,000 a year. And in North Dakota, older Americans get by on even less: 70 percent of our State's seniors have incomes of under \$15,000.